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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ANKARA 000777

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/05/2015

TAGS: PREL TU CY MT

SUBJECT: NATO-EU COOPERATION: STILL HOSTAGE TO CYPRUS

REF: A. STATE 19853

1B. ANKARA 373

Classified By: Ambassador Eric S. Edelman for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: Turkey will not change its position on NATO-EU cooperation absent ROC concessions on the Cyprus issue, including measures to help the Turkish Cypriots. End summary.

¶2. (C) Ambassador delivered ref a demarche Feb. 9 to MFA Deputy Under Secretary for Multilateral Political Affairs Nabi Sensoy. Ambassador urged the GOT to think creatively about possible solutions in order to ensure that certain European countries are not able to use this issue to drive NATO and the EU further apart. President Bush's participation in the Feb. 22 NATO Summit would be an especially good setting to deliver the news that this issue is at least partly behind us.

¶3. (C) Sensoy responded that with the Feb. 22 summit approaching the GOT had expedited its interagency discussion on this issue. While Turkey places great importance on the transatlantic link and on its relationship with the EU, Sensoy said, "I can't give you good news." While as of Dec. 17 Turkey may have gained official status as entering formal accession negotiations with the EU, the experience of the EU summit itself and the lack of any significant action to ameliorate the isolation of the Turkish Cypriots (TCs) since May of last year make it impossible for Turkey to contemplate making an opening on this issue. Given the current situation, Sensoy added, it would be premature even to discuss the possible areas for NATO-EU discussion outlined in ref a non-paper.

¶4. (C) Ambassador responded that we don't want to see a situation where the Cyprus problem creates "collateral damage," such as NATO-EU cooperation. With several issues related to Cyprus piling up at once--NATO-EU cooperation, Cyprus' application for bodies such as the Wassenaar Arrangement, the Ankara Agreement extension protocol--Turkey runs the risk that many in the international community will again view Turkey as it did before 2004: as THE obstacle on all issues related to Cyprus. If we were to see a positive step on Cyprus--for example if the ROC were to remove its block to EU aid and trade for the Turkish Cypriots--would Ankara be ready to move on this issue?

¶5. (C) Sensoy said he was "not in a position" to say that this would make a difference. The key, he pointed out, was that Turkish politicians would need to see real progress for themselves, progress they could also display to the Turkish people. Absent such movement, why should Turkey feel obligated to move first?

¶6. (C) Ambassador also discussed the issue Feb. 8 with Defense Minister Vecdi Gonul as Gonul prepared to depart for the Nice Defense Ministerial. Gonul responded that the GOT must first see movement from the EU on Cyprus before it can make any concession on NATO-EU cooperation. Feelings about Cyprus in Turkey are running so high now, he said, that to make any concession absent any action from the EU could derail Turkey's EU candidacy.

¶7. (C) In addition to the Ambassador's efforts, PoMilCouns called on Deputy DG for Security Policy Fatih Ceylan Feb. 8 to discuss ref a demarche. Ceylan confirmed (as reported ref b) that the Turkish MFA has presented some ideas for compromise to the GOT, but the decision on NATO-EU cooperation is now both politicized and political. Turkey's political leadership is grappling with two competing policy priorities: increasing NATO-EU cooperation and dealing with the EU's lack of progress on aid and trade for northern Cyprus. Ceylan (please protect) candidly stated that the battle within the GOT is between the Cyprus hard-liners and the Atlanticists. PolMilCouns noted that we continue to seek creative thinking on this issue. Ceylan responded that even if Turkey were to decide to allow Cyprus and Malta to participate in NATO-EU security cooperation discussions, the topics could not cover any Berlin Plus issue, i.e., any topic which would include NATO operational planning.

¶8. (C) Comment: The MFA has firmly linked NATO-EU cooperation to ROC concessions on Cyprus and measures to help the TCs. Ceylan's comments suggest the GOT understands the stakes and

is therefore wrestling with this issue; Sensoy's indicate that the hard-liners are still on top. Unfortunately, we cannot share ref a's view that Turkey's post-Dec. 17 status has changed the Turks' perspective on this issue. Indeed, it may even have hardened. As we noted ref b and Sensoy told the Ambassador, the Turks still have a bitter taste in their mouths regarding how the EU handled Cyprus at the Dec. 16-17 EU summit and the lack of measures to help the TCs. Sensoy made clear that Turkey feels betrayed by the international community--and especially the EU--for this lack of progress. We predict no movement on this issue from Ankara at least until and unless the EU can convince the ROC to stop blocking measures to assist the north.

EDELMAN